

Meeting Minutes

Approved

Middle School Building Committee Meeting

November 4, 2013 – 8:15 a.m.

BOE Conference Room, 3rd Floor Annex Building

5 Linsley Street, North Haven, CT

Committee Members in Attendance:

Goldie Adele, Michael Brandt, Miriam Brody, Lou Coppola, Sr., Gary Johns (committee chairman), Bruce Morris, Joseph Porto, Michelle Spader (committee secretary), Dyann Vissicchio (committee vice-chair)

Absent: Walter Nester, Jr.

Others in Attendance:

Kristine Carling, Dr. Robert Cronin, Jeffrey Donofrio, Phil Diana, David Mikos, Phil Piazza, Edward Swinkoski, Diversified Technology Consultants (DTC); Shay Atluru, Graham Curtis, Bob Hammersly, Rick Morse, Perkins Eastman; Joe Costs, Fritz Morris

Meeting called to order at: 8:17 am by chairman, Gary Johns.

Approval of the minutes from October 21, 2013 meeting – Motion to approve by Bruce Morris and seconded by Joseph Porto. The motion passed unanimously.

DTC & Perkins Eastman were invited to attend today's meeting so that committee members could ask additional clarifying questions and address any concerns regarding middle school options.

The chairman requested that DTC provide the 'hybrid' option narrative for our next meeting, as we had hoped to have this information for today's meeting. Shay Atluru apologized that it was not made available to us today.

The first option discussed in depth was the 'Gateway' option. Bob Hammersly, government relations officer of DTC spoke in regards to the Gateway conveyance process. There is a whole process that the property would need to go through before there could even be a decision to sell by the state. Gateway would have to say that they no longer have a use for the property (pull the automotive program out of the school), at which point it would be reverted back to the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents would have to do an evaluation and determine that they have no use for the property, at which point it would be reverted to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), and then after their evaluation and determination that they have no use for the building, the town would receive the right of first refusal at a cost to be determined by the OPM. That whole process, in a best case scenario, can take upwards of 10 years to get to the point where the town would have the option to purchase the property. Other

considerations to factor into pursuing this option are the reimbursement levels. There is uncertainty as to what the reimbursement percentage will be 10 years from now and how much it will cost us to acquire the building.

Bruce Morris remarked that not only do we not know what the state might set the purchase price of the building at, but we must also consider the remediation costs of cleaning up the contaminants from the automotive shop at Gateway, which could be quite substantial.

Dyann Vissicchio believes the acquisition cost of \$5 million dollars is a slim possibility and when you look at the bottom line the cost is very close to the other options, which are more feasible. There are many reasons we cannot wait that long for this option. Among them are the roof of the existing middle school, the NEASC accreditation, the insufficient size of the cafeteria, and awaiting removal of the Gateway automotive program.

Michael Brandt questioned whether Gateway could still be an option to use as a swing space, while we rebuild/renovate. It would be a process to get the state to agree to let us use the property. There would need to be an indemnification process to hold the state harmless in regards to any liability. We would also have to deal with the fact that there is an operating automotive program, with adult students, on the campus, in the basement. There would be additional spend to the town if we were to utilize that space during construction. In the "Renovate as new" option there is approximately \$400K allocated for swing space. Utilizing Gateway as the swing space would probably require an additional \$100K be added to the costs.

According to DTC, the assessor's maps were checked and they are confident the town of North Haven does own the fields behind Gateway. Brandt also asked about whether or not the ultimate purchaser of the Gateway property could try to also get the fields. Atluru stressed that would be a town decision to make. The town owns the fields.

Michelle Spader, who initially proposed the idea of utilizing Gateway as a swing space remarked that once the committee received more information regarding the insufficient cafeteria size, the fact that there would be no gymnasium for the middle school students to use (since the current gyms house the Gateway automotive shop) and the fact that from a security perspective she was not in favor of the 6th-8th graders being in the same space as the adults, she now considers it a "non option". Brandt also remarked that he was also not in favor of this option.

The chairman asked David Mikos if he could give his opinion of the Gateway option, since he has been a vocal proponent of it. Mikos said he spoke to Senator Fasano and his view differs on the time line of acquisition of Gateway. Mikos thought it would have been great if we had someone from the state at this meeting rather than relying on the info provided by DTC in regards to timeline. He would have liked to hear someone from the state concur on the 8-10 year timeline to acquisition. He is very concerned about the fields and believes the fields that are proposed in the options we have been provided will not suit the town's needs (not regulation size, etc).

Mikos believes the fields are the worst they have been in 20-25 years due to a host of issues ranging from overuse and maintenance deficiencies. He is also concerned if someone else comes along to buy the Gateway property they are going to pressure the town into selling the fields, so they can own it in its entirety.

Vice-chair Vissicchio explained to Mr. Mikos that the costs of this Gateway option would end up being higher than any of the other options for a number of reasons, one of which is the underestimated acquisition cost of the property and she does not believe the townspeople have the appetite for this higher cost option.

Mikos believes some of the fields proposed in the 'new construction' option do not meet CIAC regulations and is concerned about the layout of the proposed fields. Mr. Atluru made sure the committee was aware that the information listed in regards to new fields was strictly "place holders" and no plans are firm. Those conversations into exactly which type and size of fields would be discussed with the town before any such decisions are made. Bruce Morris believes there should be another task force to study the towns athletic fields issues and that it needs to be separate from the scope of this committee. Chairman Johns agreed.

Mikos does not want the Gateway option closed out.

Atluru also pointed out that if we were to decide on going with the 'Gateway' option, the state of Connecticut would not pickup any of the cost of demolition/deconstruction/remediation of that site. 100% of the cost would be the town of North Haven's responsibility because it is not on the same property of the option chosen. Separate campus, separate project. If we do the 'hybrid' version, because it is on the same site, contiguous to the existing building, the state would participate in the reimbursement of these costs. If we chose the option of the 'new' school, because we would have to replace a field, the state would be sensitive to the fact that the field needs to be replaced and they would pay to demolish the existing middle school and put a field on it. The 'Gateway' option is the only option that does not give the town any money for the demolition of the existing middle school.

Due to the fact that no committee members had anything positive to say about the Gateway option, the chairman asked that we entertain a motion to eliminate the Gateway option. Joseph Porto made the motion and it was seconded by Bruce Morris. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Porto asked Mr. Piazza and Dr. Cronin their opinion as to the pros and cons of a unified campus.

One benefit that Dr. Cronin expressed was the sharing of staff between the current middle school and high school buildings – currently a French teacher is going back and forth between the 2 buildings. He also mentioned that going forward opportunities for 8th graders to take classes at the high school are being discussed. That would not be feasible if the two schools were across town from one another. Mr. Piazza brought up the transportation issues, since we now have 6-12 sharing the same buses as well as shared music/arts between the 2 schools. No cons were identified by either.

The committee moved on to discuss the options which included renovations to the existing middle school. Goldie Adele asked whether the assessments DTC provided looked at hidden defects/structural surprises that might increase costs. We were told that in the last couple of months the notion of PCB's within windows and caulk has been prevalent throughout the state. In Southington it kicked up the cost of renovations of their two middle schools by \$14 million. In New Haven there was \$20 million in additional costs added to a school currently undergoing renovations. We currently have not undergone any testing and we do not want to undergo any testing until we have to do it. As long as you do not disturb PCB's, they are harmless. Once you start demolition, they become airborne and require a higher degree of remediation.

Michelle Spader asked how we can consider "renovate as new" or the hybrid as viable options since they would both require demolition, which would in turn make any PCB's airborne and cause our costs of remediation to increase dramatically. DTC explained that we do not know if those PCB's do exist and they are just warning in advance that it is a possibility. In the case of Southington they had to go back out to referendum a second time to cover the extensive cost of those unforeseen conditions. Fritz Morris suggested doing extensive testing before we keep or eliminate the renovation options.

PCB testing for the 'renovate as new' option is not expensive - under \$10K. Phase 1 environmental should also be considered for the 'new school' option (approximately \$10K – phase 1 environmental and then if they find something there would be the need for phase 2, etc.). Phase 1 looks at historic uses of the site (factory on site, dump?) If history is questionable, you probe deeper and do a phase 2 study and phase 3, if necessary.

Under a 'renovate as new' we would not be able to alter classroom sizes and there would be no layout changes or much of a recognizable exterior change to the building. Generally the building you see now, is the building you end up with. 'Renovate as new' is a riskier option than a 'new construction', due to possible unforeseen structural deficiencies and since the unknowns on a 'new construction' are a lot less. Thus, the contingency dollars are higher in a "renovate as new" project.

Attorney Donofrio attested to the fact that with a renovation project you never really know what the project is ultimately going to cost before it is 100% complete. You just have no way of knowing, until you open up walls, ceilings and floors. Therefore, the construction and design contingency on a 'renovate as new' have to be a lot higher than on a 'new construction'.

Bruce Morris expressed that he has a problem with "putting lipstick on a pig".

If we 'renovate as new' we are also subject to state statute that says we have to renovate it, in its entirety, and if the current square footage is larger than what we have projected to be our future needs we are still required to spend the extra money to renovate every portion of that building.

There is also a state statute that says you are not allowed to abate when a building is occupied by students, so abatement and remediation would only be allowed to occur when there are no children in the building, which would limit it to summer. Thereby extending the length of construction. Pre-demo

abatement is already budgeted for. It is a lot less costly and a lot less risky. 100% of the reimbursable portion of the eligible amount would be picked up by the state.

Miriam Brody questioned whether or not LEED Silver Certification was required. It is not required. It was included in the cost outline because the Ed Spec requested LEED. Removal of the certification could save 5%. We would still design to those high standards, but do not need to pursue the certification.

Chairman Johns reiterated to DTC our desire to have DTC/Perkins Eastman come to our next meeting so that we can continue to talk about the remaining options. Miriam Brody make known her desire to see more information on the 'renovate and add new to the existing middle school' option.

Mr. Porto suggested that he would like to hear from Mr. Piazza and Dr. Cronin at the next meeting, as to which option they favor.

Mr. Piazza inquired about what land/fields would be available based upon our remaining options. It was verified by Fritz Morris, that with the 'build as new' option, 3 fields would be displaced - baseball, soccer, and a football practice field. Mr. Diana also interjected that javelin and discus space would also be affected.

At the next meeting on November 18, we will finish up discussion on the 'renovate as new' option and then have an in-depth discussion of the final two options under consideration – the 'hybrid' option and the 'new school' option.

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 am by Dyann Vissicchio and seconded by Michael Brandt, with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Spader